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ABSTRACT

Native speakers, when listening to lectures, sift through the information to choose what to listen to, make hypotheses about future discourse, synthesize preceding discourse, and add their own background knowledge. Nonnative speakers, in their native languages, follow the same procedures. When dealing with a foreign language, however, they are not as aware of the conventions and cues that allow one to evaluate information, make hypotheses, and add background knowledge. Non-native speakers need to be aware of their active role as listeners in the foreign language as well as in their native language. Lecture transcripts and cloze lecture transcripts can be used and analyzed to make students aware of the process of listening to lectures and to give students confidence in their ability to listen selectively, piecing the discourse together, without attending to every word. Five exercises are suggested for nonnative speakers based on the theories and analyses cited: transcripts analysis, lecture transcripts with blanks for words or ideas, and hypothesis-making using lecture transcripts in three lengths. (AMH)

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Using Lecture Transcripts in EAP Lecture Comprehension Courses

Roni Lebauer

A problem common to many advanced listening comprehension and note-taking classes is that the students seem fluent yet still have difficulties grasping the points of the lectures. From my own experience, I have come to believe that their problems stem less from lexical and syntactic sources than from discoursal or processing difficulties. On the level of discourse, the students have a hard time answering a question about what the speaker is trying to say; they cannot describe the speaker's communicative intent; they have a hard time making judgments about the value of individual propositions. On the processing level, the students may have a problem dealing with the constant flow of information, needing more time to process the incoming data (Rivers 1966).

This article will concern itself with the cognitive factors involved in listening (how the listener works with incoming data) and the discourse factors involved in listening to lectures (what is in the text itself) in order to support a pedagogy of teaching, not testing, lecture comprehension to advanced students. The article will conclude with methods involving a combined teacher/student exploration of what is going on during the interaction of the listener/ the lecture/ the lecturer.

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Cognitive Factors

Much research has been done to answer the question of what goes on in the listener's mind as he processes connected discourse for retention. One of the first researchers to deal with this question was Bartlett (1932). He felt that researchers had to account for the fact that when a passage was

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recalled, it was not reproduced exactly but was rather reconstructed in the light of a person's "schema" at the time of recall. This concept of listening being a process of reconstruction based on the listener's own expectations and analysis and requiring the listener's own inferences has resulted in what may most generally be called "schema theory". Schema theory is based on the belief that the spoken or written text does not in itself carry the meaning. Rather, "a text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct the intended meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge" (Adams and Collins 1979:3). Obviously, listeners are not passive receivers. While listening, they are constantly recreating the text.

This process of recreating the text involves a number of processes. The listener is predicting at all levels: on the phonetic level, on the syntactic level, on the lexical level, on the discoursal level. The listener is making inferences based on cultural knowledge, content knowledge, and past experience with lecture discourse. A speaker assumes that the audience shares common knowledge with him/her; the listener assumes the same of the speaker. Lastly, in terms of information processing, the listener is consolidating, deleting, and generalizing information (Van Dijk 1977). In order to do this, the listener must have a firm idea of what the speaker is doing at each step of the lecture process in addition to comprehending the content. The listener cannot treat the pieces of incoming information as discrete pieces but must instead acknowledge the discoursal thread that ties the pieces together. The listener must understand the purpose of a proposition as well as its content.

The preceding description of the listening process applies to all listeners. In the light of this analysis, it is possible to see where nonnative speakers

may have problems. Kaplan (1966) discusses "contrastive rhetoric", the concept that different cultures have different assumptions about the ways to communicate ideas. This would be a problem on the level of discourse. The problem could also stem from lexical or cultural sources (e.g. begging in one culture may connote a renunciation and spiritual search while in another culture the word only carries pejorative connotations). Lastly, the problem may be a psychological problem--often fostered by previous English language training--involving a fear of not attending equally to each word.

The consequences of nonnative speaker problems with the foreign language text recreation process range from small misinterpretations of detail to larger problems of inability to isolate the topic and focus on the meaning of the lecture as a whole and inability to recognize the relation of the support to the main points. The nonnative speakers who have difficulty isolating the topic or who find that incoming information does not fit into their hypothesized structure have different options: they can admit defeat and confusion; they can feel that it has made sense, rationalizing and ignoring contradictions; they can blame the lecturer. The only useful option is for non-native speakers to learn flexibility in revising hypotheses and to expand their field of possible hypotheses.

Therefore, in the ESL classroom two strategies of listening to lectures must be fostered. Firstly, students must be led to the formation of correct hypotheses (or at least the formation of tentative hypotheses that can be revised by incorporating preceding or incoming data) on the lexical, syntactic, and discoursal level. Secondly, students must be led to understand the purpose in each section of the lecture as well as the lecture content.

Discourse Factors

The cognitive factors focus on what is going on in the listeners as they process lecture discourse. It is also important to focus on what is in the lecture itself that aids the text recreation process.

M. Cook (1974) based an analysis of lecture discourse on the supposition that lecture discourse is a process of maintaining and directing relevanee in speech. She concludes that smooth transitions are attempted by all lecturers and that these transitions involve three general rules: (1) topic continuation, (2) topic recyclying, and (3) topic change. Topic continuation is the use of connectives, enabling the speaker to move from one topic to a related topic and suggesting the relevance between the two topics. Topic recycling is applied when the lecturer wishes to elaborate on some previous topic in the form of examples, contrasts, analogies, etc. Topic change serves to close off or limit a previous topic.

Murphy and Candlin (1979) applied the Sinclair/ Coulthard (1975) model of discourse analyses to an engineering lecture and identified several strategies such as "marker" ("well", "right"), "starter" ("wall now let's get on with engineering"), "elicitation" ("I think that most of you have met the result before, haven't you?"), "acceptance" ("yes good"), "informative", "comment" ("more usually known as the triangle of forces"), "aside" ("running out of blackboard space here"), "metastatement" ("I want to mention two types of generators") and "conclusion" ("so there you've got three forces"). They noted that lecturers often proceed as if involved in two way communication, providing dummy responses and feedback by themselves.

Murphy and Candlin (1979) also used an analysis by J. Cook (1975) which breaks the lecture down into focal episodes, developmental episodes,

and closing episodes. Each episode is composed of different moves which include focussing moves, concluding moves, describing moves, asserting moves, relating moves, summarizing moves, recommending moves, justifying moves, qualifying moves, contrasting moves, and explaining moves.

In addition to looking at the strategies and moves in lecture discourse, Murphy and Candlin looked at the cohesive devices in lectures. They considered five specific devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. They divided reference items into exophoric reference (referring to the context of the situation) and endophoric reference (referring to items within the text itself). Endophoric reference items were further broken down into anaphoric reference (referring backwards in the text) and cataphoric reference (referring to what is to come in the text). These endophoric references are realized through the use of demonstrative pronouns (the proof of that is...), personal pronouns and possessives, comparative reference (this case is different), and lexicon such as same , similar , other , different , likewise , etc. Substitution is a device whereby information is related to other information by a grammatical device such as replacement of nouns (one , ones , same), verbs (do as in John has a car but Jim doesn't), and clauses with so and not (Have I got that wrong? I hope not). Ellipsis is substitution by zero (so the magnitude of one force then defines the magnitude of the other two where forces is elided after two). Conjunctive elements serve the function of relating linguistic elements that occur in succession but are not related by other structural means. These conjunctive elements relate two elements in an additive manner (furthermore , for instance), in an adversative manner (yet, nevertheless), in a causal manner (so, for this reason) and in a temporal manner (previously, to return to this point). Candlin and Murphy stress the importance of adversative and causative

conjunctions in particular. Some causatives, they note, such as so, then, therefore, may mark concluding moves in the discourse. The causatives signal that what follows will be information that the learner should be focussed on. Adversative correction of meaning, they say, also signals important information in that it reflects what has preceded and focusses attention on what follows. A last device of cohesion is lexical cohesion, the practice of reiterating items in referential terms and then relexicalizing that item at the start of a new exchange.

These analyses are useful in that they demonstrate that within the lecture situation, the lecturer attempts to signal what aspects of the lecture are important and unimportant. The lecturer also attempts to signal how she has organized the lecture and how she wants it to be perceived. These analyses can help ESL teachers be more aware of the different acts and moves and their realization within a lecture--knowledge which can later be shared with the students. For the nonnative speaker, an awareness of the verbal and non-verbal markers, the cohesive devices, and the different assumptions and inferences that native speakers make when listening to lectures can lead to greater ease in prediction and greater ease in following the lecturer's thoughts.

Many of these skills can first be introduced through the examination of lecture transcripts. The goal of using transcripts is to get students to start looking at what goes on in lectures, to get students to start thinking about what they need to do in order to listen successfully, to help students become comfortable with ambiguity and guessing, to help students use this ambiguity to make and refine hypotheses during lectures, and finally, to allow students to see how a native speaker interprets lectures, the native speaker process of listening.

Using Lecture Transcripts

Following are five possible exercises using lecture transcripts. The transcripts are taken from lectures given to native and nonnative speaker classes at the University of Hawaii and the University of California at Irvine. These exercises are sequenced and are designed to introduce a course in lecture comprehension. The students may hear the following transcript exercises spoken aloud, but the focus of the exercises is on looking at the text. It is after these exercises that the students would proceed to the listening part of the coursework.

In the first and second exercises, lecture transcripts are used so that students see and discuss in concrete terms what is taking place during the lecture. The first exercise uses a complete transcript; the second exercise uses a transcript with words and ideas omitted. In the third and fourth exercises, students are looking at lecture segments and predicting lecture direction and discussing how they made their predictions. In the fifth exercise, students are looking at lecture transcripts with attention focussed on the overall discourse structure and drawing conclusions and making inferences based on this structure.

Transcript Analysis

The following directions are handed out for the first lecture transcript analysis. It is stressed that there are no absolute answers and that the purpose of the exercise is discussion.

1. Circle all cues. (Cues tell you what to look at, what is important, what the organization is, what information is coming next, etc. Cues do not give facts. Examples of cues are "Let's take a look at...", "Next...", etc.)
2. Bracket all references (e.g. [from this point of view]).

3. Cross out all repetition, paraphrase, secondary detail (examples, clarification, expansion) and tangents.

Below is a composite sample (based on more than one student's responses) of how a transcript segment might be analyzed.

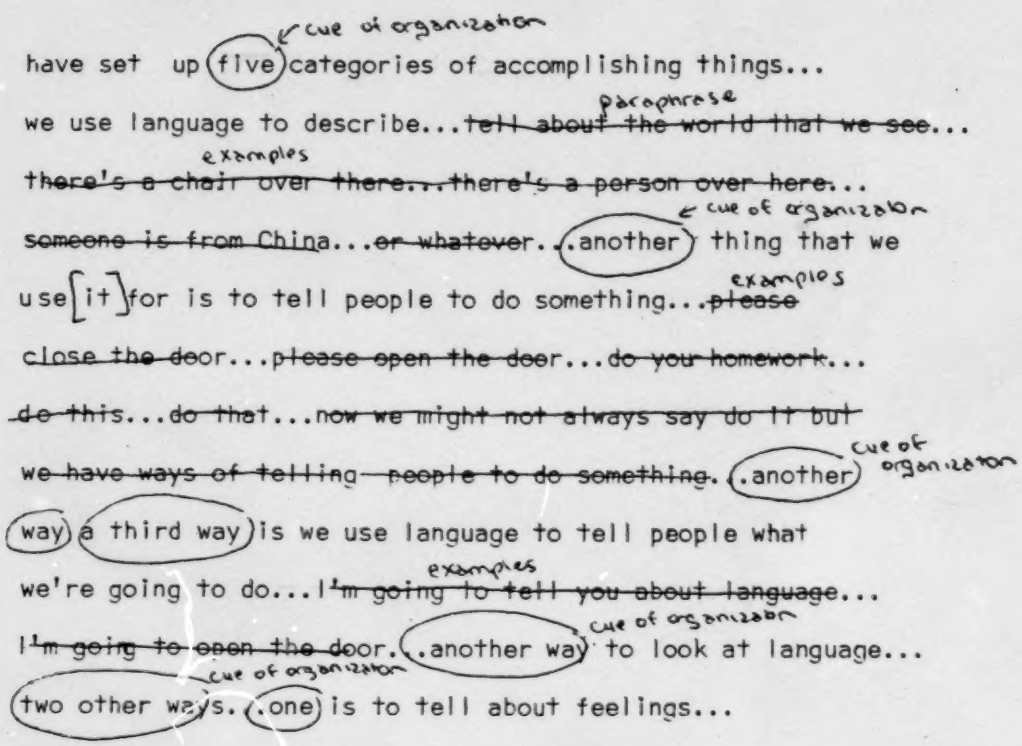
Lecture Transcript - Language

cue to topic introduction / cue to topic introduction.

let's first look at one aspect of language.. I want to look at the sociological or sociolinguistic way of looking at language...

cue to beginning of topic ???

all right from [this point of view] some linguists have come up with the idea that language is a game... ~~like football~~ (example), ~~soccer~~, ~~baseball~~...each person who speaks in any particular language or any community knows all the rules of [this game]..[~~they~~] ~~know how to play~~ (paraphrase)..somebody who comes from a different [one] ~~as you know well~~ may not know all the rules so you have some problems with communication.. now (cue???) because we said language is a game doesn't necessarily mean that we play [it] for fun...we usually play [it] for very serious reasons...most of the time... ~~although sometimes we do play [it] for fun...sometimes we tell jokes and things like that~~...~~hmmmm~~...but the rules...no matter what we do are very well defined...~~you may not know what [they] are but [they're] very clear rules of what you can do and what you can't do in any situation~~...usually in any use of language people are trying to accomplish something...~~trying to do something~~ (paraphrase)...[that's] why [they] talk...~~sometimes you just talk to yourself for no reason.. some crazy people talk for no reason but most people talk because [they] want to accomplish something~~ (repetition). .basically (cue of emphasis) some linguists



have set up five categories of accomplishing things...
we use language to describe...~~tell about the world that we see~~...
~~there's a chair over there...there's a person over here~~...
~~someone is from China...or whatever~~...another thing that we
use it for is to tell people to do something...~~please~~
~~close the door...please open the door...do your homework~~...
~~do this...do that...now we might not always say do it but~~
~~we have ways of telling people to do something~~.another
way a third way is we use language to tell people what
we're going to do...~~I'm going to tell you about language~~...
~~I'm going to open the door~~..another way to look at language...
two other ways..one is to tell about feelings...

Students often come out of a discussion based on the transcripts with the knowledge that there is a "method to the madness" and that it is within their reach. A primary benefit from this analysis is thus psychological--the students feel that there is a way to listen to a lecture and that there is some means by which they can learn how to listen. A teaching benefit is that a framework for discussing lectures, notes, listening, etc. has been established. Both teachers and students can talk about what was happening in the lecture (the communicative intent of the lecturer) in addition to discrete points in the lecture (**e.g.** the teacher can talk about the process of enumerating and the cues of enumeration as separate from the fact of there being five different functions of language).

"Cloze" Lecture Transcripts

At this point, the students may still not be convinced that it is within their power to pass over any information. The second transcript

exercise serves to dispel those fears. These exercises involve lecture transcripts with blanks which need to be filled in with words or ideas. (The transcripts are not true cloze exercises because no formula is used to create the blanks. Rather, blanks are created by chance or where a possible inference about content could be made.) Students are warned that there are no absolute answers and that in some cases, they do not have enough clues to find an answer. In this way, students become more comfortable with ambiguity and lack of constant precision. The instructions for these exercises follow.

1. Fill in the blanks with a word or words that make sense.
2. Clarify for yourself (you do not need to write anything) what clues you used for the choices you made.

Below are segments of an exercise with an actual student response.

> ...all right and the last thing is that we have rules for the game...just like we have rules now...when I talk you <u>listen</u> unless I give you some signal that says its time for you to talk or I stop talking...there are very definite rules for not interrupting and <u>talk</u>...and for all kinds of things...we all know these rules but we probably <u>don't pay much attention</u>... when you're talking about football you can say it's played in a field so big so wide you can't kick the ball off the field... it has many <u>rules</u> and everybody can learn those <u>rules</u> and tell us what they are...language is a little different...if I asked you for some of the rules of language <u>you probably would say several of them</u> ...

In the above example, the teacher can see that the student's guesses were good until the last blank which required a more comprehensive

inference. The inference should be just the opposite of what the student suggested (i.e. that it would be difficult to explain the rules). The teacher's role, then, in this activity is to get students to see what cues they used to predict what was coming. Where students can't predict, the teacher can discuss concepts of repetition, parallelism, reference, repeated organizational patterns, cliches, etc.This exercise serves to put into practice ideas that were discussed theoretically in the first exercise using complete transcripts. One more example of this type of exercise will demonstrate the importance of this predictive quality of listening and also demonstrate what the teacher and student can learn about faulty predictions.

> so...in terms of the sociolinguistic way of looking at language... language is a kind of a rule-governed behavior...of interaction between people...like a <u>game</u> ...everybody knows the <u>rules</u> they're mutually intelligible...we all know within a given community we know what _____...<u>everybody</u> knows how to play...now the big question for you probably and for me if I'm trying to learn a language ... <u>what is the real definition of language</u> ?

This last inference would be the major topic of the remainder of the lecture yet the student was somewhat off track.

Hypothesis Making Using Lecture Transcripts

The students, through analysis of transcripts and "cloze" lecture transcripts, are introduced to the concept of cues, organizational patterns, redundancy, expansion, paraphrase, etc. In order to put these skills into pradice, students will use this knowledge to make predictions about discourse direction. The third exercise involves hypothesis making on the one or two

utterance level and is designed to introduce the students to the concept of discourse coherence. Words are not to be interpreted in isolation but must be related both backwards and forwards to other information in the discourse. The students are constantly being asked four questions: Where is the speaker heading (in a general sense)? What will come next? How do you know? Is this important information? An idealized teacher/student interaction is given below. (In the classroom, the teacher would most likely give more clues to elicit these ideas and would probably give many of his or her own ideas and analyses.)

Lecture Segment	Teacher-Student Interaction
Let's turn to the Tao Te Ching itself...	T: Where is the speaker heading? S: He'll look at what's in the book... the ideas in the book... T: What will come next? S: one main idea from the book? the first page of the book? the book's organization? T: How do you know? S: "turn to the book itself"...so he's not talking about the background of the book...he wants to look at the content of the book... T: Is this important information? S: Yes...the lecturer is telling us his focus...directing our attention

now..the center of this book is in this word Tao (written on board)... this is the heart...

T: Where is the speaker heading?

S: he wants to talk about what Tao means...wants to talk about how whole book relates to Tao.

T: What will come next?

S: a definition of Tao?...what Tao is?

T: How do you know?

S: He uses words like center, wrote the word on the board...stresses this is the heart

T: Is this important information?

S: yes...further subcategorizes topic from Tao Te Ching to Tao

so...if you can know what this word is trying to say... and the way you know it is not by sitting down and intellectually grasping...

T: Where is the speaker heading?

S:...how can you know what this word means

T: What will come next?

S: he says the way is not by sitting down and intellectualizing...must be by feeling...

T: How do you know?

S: first he says we can know what Tao is but then he tells us how not to find out... he must intend to tell us later how we can find out...

T: Is this important information?

S: maybe...it seems that the important information will come...this is leading up to it...

On a larger segment level, a lecture may be broken down into one to three minute segments. Again, the students will be asked to predict where the speaker is heading, to predict what will come next, and to describe how they have arrived at those conclusions. A transcript with three possible discussion points is given below.

All over the world the question of women's role in society is becoming...or <u>is</u> an emotionally charged issue...Women are questioning their previous roles and exploring new roles...Everyone seems to have an opinion about it...one good thing that has come out of this is that women now feel that they have control or more control over the direction of their lives...but this has caused some conflict...in fact...some people are saying that women's liberation has put more strain on women than ever before...in any case...at lease in the United States and many other countries...women must now decide a major question...whether to work...pursue a career... or whether to stay at home and raise a family or whether to do both...I must add that this is the dilemma of a lucky few women... here in the United States nowadays the majority of working women must work and it is no longer a luxury...but anyway what I would like to focus on in this lecture are...

STOP. Where is the speaker heading? What will come next?

How do you know?

some of the factors a woman might want to take into account when deciding whether to work or not...a major question would be which one is emotionally and physically more beneficial...let me first look at the physical side of the question...previously we knew that men had a higher heart attack rate than women did...and that most

people blamed that on the fact that they worked and women didn't... work being more stressful than staying at home...however...now...

STOP. Where is the speaker heading? What will come next?

How do you know?

with 50% of women in the job market and still there is an uneven heart attack rate this theory has lost credibility...

The lecture continues describing tests comparing the physical and emotional strength of working women versus housewives. The following segment is from the end of the transcript.

...what did the researchers find?...first of all they found that housewives generally experience lower levels of stressful life events than employed women do...yet...they seem to react to life crises with more psychological distress than employed women do...that is, they have less stress in their lives yet they show more psychological distress...to put it from the employed woman's perspective the employed women have more stress in their lives both at work and in their marriages yet they show fewer signs of psychological distress...this test seems to imply quite a lot...

STOP. Where is the speaker heading? What will come next?

How do you know?

Lastly, the students need to be able to predict overall lecture development plans. This is especially important in notetaking when the students must organize and arrange the ideas in the lecture visually while listening. The same lecture transcript on working versus staying at home may be used, stopping at a different point in this case.

All over the world the question of woman's role in society is becoming...or is an emotionally charged issue...women are

questioning their previous roles and exploring new roles... everyone seems to have an opinion on it...one good thing that has come out of this is that women now feel that they have control or more control over the direction of their lives... but this has caused some conflict...in fact...some people are saying that women's liberation has put more strain on women than ever before...in any case...at least in the United States and many other countries...women must now decide a major question... whether to work...pursue a career...or whether to stay at home and raise a family or whether to do both...I must add that this is the dilemma of a lucky few women...here in the United States nowadays the majority of working women must work and it is no longer a luxury...but anyway what I would like to focus on in this lecture are some of the factors a woman might want to take into account when deciding whether to work or not...a major question would be which one is emotionally and physically more beneficial...let me first look at the physical side of the question...

At this point the student should be able to predict that the lecturer will first present the arguments concerning the physical benefits of working or staying at home and subsequently present the arguments concerning the emotional benefits of working or staying at home and finally draw conclusions based on the information discussed.

Conclusion

In lecture comprehension and notetaking courses, I have found that this introduction to lectures through transcript analysis provides a strong

base for listening and discussion later on. From the beginning, students are confident that there is something to be learned. Students are not misled into believing that the skill can be mastered without listening--listening is still the major part of the course--but they are aware that there is a skill. Later work involving note-taking makes use of ideas discussed with lecture transcripts. Students are better able to organize the incoming information as they listen because they are more aware of their role in sifting through the verbiage, following the lecturer's organizational design, and making predictions about where the lecture is heading. Lastly, when students are called upon to give short talks, these analyses of lecture transcripts again prove to be useful. Students can critique their own talks by looking at how clearly they have led the listener to follow their train of thought.

The five exercises dealing with lecture transcripts are only a small part of a lecture comprehension class. Working with transcripts at the beginning of the course, however, can serve as an introduction to the listening process and listening skills and benefit both teachers and students in providing a means to discuss the process of the lecturer/ lecture/ listener interaction.

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